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AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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December 29, 2005

TO: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – PIONEER BOYS
RANCH, CROSS GROUP HOME**

We have completed a review of Cross Group Home (Group Home or Agency) operated by Pioneer Boys Ranch. The Group Home contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation).

Cross Group Home is a six-bed facility, which provides care for boys ages 12-17 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Cross Group Home was providing services for four Los Angeles County DCFS children and two children under dual supervision of DCFS and Probation.

Cross Group Home is located in the Fifth District.

Scope of Review

The purpose of the review is to determine whether the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement. Additionally, the review covers basic child safety and licensing issues, and includes an evaluation of the Agency's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, a facility inspection, and interviews with children placed in the Group Home at the time of the review. Interviews with children are designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by the Agency, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Summary of Findings

Generally, the Agency is providing the services as outlined in their Program Statement. However, the Agency needs to address several deficient areas.

Cross Group Home needs to repair and replace several screens on the exterior of the house; maintain current comprehensive Needs and Services Plans, with time limited goals; maintain documentation to show that children are receiving identified treatment services; obtain and maintain current court authorizations for psychotropic medications; provide children with a sufficient quantity of clothing; and provide children with the required minimum weekly allowance.

Attached is a detailed report of the review.

Review of Report

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. In response to the recommendations made in the report, the Agency's management completed a corrective action plan (attached) which we approved. We thank the management and staff for their cooperation during our review.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact Mike Pirolo at (626) 293-1110.

JTM:MP:CC:dl

http://auditor.co.la.ca.us/group_home.asp

Attachments

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS
Paul Higa, Chief Probation Officer
Greg Iungerman, Executive Director, Pioneer Boys Ranch
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**Pioneer Boys Ranch
Cross Group Home
24235 Cross Street
Newhall, California 91321
Phone: (661) 259-6465
License Number: 191202257
Rate Classification Level: 11**

I. Facility and Environment

Method of assessment – Observation

Comments:

Cross Group Home is located in a residential community. The exterior of the Group Home is well maintained. The front and back yards are clean, and adequately landscaped.

The interior of the Group Home is well maintained. The common quarters are neat and clean. There is adequate furniture and lighting in the Group Home. The Group Home provides a home-like environment. However, a screen is missing from the kitchen window, and two patio window screens are torn.

Children's bedrooms are well maintained. The rooms are clean and orderly, and have age-appropriate personalized decorations. There is adequate furniture, lighting, and storage space. The mattresses are comfortable, and the beds all have a full complement of linens. Children's sleeping arrangements are appropriate. Window coverings are in good repair; however, screens are missing from windows in bedrooms one and three.

The Group Home maintains age appropriate and accessible recreational equipment. There are also board games, a TV, and a DVD player. Books and resource materials, including a computer with a variety of programs, are also available.

The Group Home maintains a sufficient supply of perishable and non perishable foods.

Recommendation

- 1. Pioneer Boys Ranch Management repair and/or replace window screens in the kitchen, patio, and bedrooms one and three.**

II. Program Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Two

Comments:

Children meet the Group Home's population criteria as outlined in their Program Statement. Children are assessed for needed services within thirty days of placement.

The treatment team develops and implements the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) with input from the child. One child has a current NSP; however, the other child does not. The NSPs are comprehensive, but do not have time limited goals.

One child's case file reflects adequate documentation to show the child is receiving treatment services as identified in his NSP; however, the other child's case file does not.

Recommendations

2. Pioneer Boys Ranch Management:

- a. Maintain current NSPs for all children.**
- b. Develop comprehensive NSPs that have time limited goals.**
- c. Maintain documentation to show that children are receiving treatment services as identified in their NSPs.**

III. Educational and Emancipation Services

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Two

Comments:

Children are attending school. Children are provided with educational support and resources to meet their educational needs, and are progressing satisfactorily in school. The Group Home's program includes the development of children's daily living, self-help, and survival skills.

Children are provided with opportunities to participate in emancipation and vocational programs as appropriate.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

IV. Recreation and Activities

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Two

Comments:

The Group Home provides children with sufficient recreational activities, and leisure time. Children are given opportunities to participate in planning activities.

Children are allowed to participate in extra-curricular, enrichment, and social activities in which they have an interest.

The Group Home provides transportation to and from the activities.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

V. Psychotropic Medication

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents

Comments:

The one child who is taking psychotropic medication does not have a current court authorization for his medication. Documentation confirms that children are routinely seen by the prescribing psychiatrist.

Children are informed about their psychotropic medication, and are aware of their right to refuse medication.

Medication distribution logs are properly maintained.

Recommendation

- 3. Pioneer Boys Ranch Management maintain current court authorizations for all children receiving psychotropic medications.**

VI. Personal Rights

Method of assessment – Interviews with children

Sample size for interviews: Two

Comments:

Children are informed about the Group Home's policies and procedures. Children report that they feel safe in the Group Home, and are provided with appropriate staff supervision. Children express satisfaction with the quality of their interactions with staff, and report that staff treats them with respect and dignity.

Children report that they are assigned chores that are reasonable and not too demanding. Children are allowed to have private visitors, to make and receive personal telephone calls, and to send and receive unopened correspondence and mail. Children are able to attend religious services of their choice.

Children report that the discipline policies are consistently enforced and that there are fair and appropriate consequences for inappropriate behavior.

Children report satisfaction with meals and snacks.

Children receive voluntary medical, dental, and psychiatric care.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

VII. Clothing and Allowance

Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and interviews

Sample size for interviews: Two

Comments:

The Group Home provides appropriate clothing, items of necessity, and the required \$50 monthly clothing allowance to children. Children are given opportunities to select their own clothes. Clothing provided to children is of good quality. One child has a sufficient quantity of clothing; however, one child is in need of slippers.

Children are permitted to spend their allowances as they choose. However, the Group Home does not provide children with the required minimum base allowance.

The Group Home provides children with adequate personal care items.

Children are encouraged and assisted in creating and maintaining photo albums/life books.

Recommendations

4. Pioneer Boys Ranch Management:

- a. Provide children with sufficient clothes to meet DCFS clothing standards for quantity.**
- b. Provide children with the required minimum base allowance.**

Don Luther
Department of the Auditor Controller
500 West Temple Street
Room 515-A
Los Angeles, Ca. 90012
9/22/05
Fax : 213-346-9020

Dear Don,

The following is a plan of correction in response to the program audit recommendations provided by your department on 8/1/05 regarding Pioneer Boys Ranch # 2 at 24235 Cross St. in Newhall.

The following recommendations were made.

1. Repair and replace window screens in the patio, kitchen, and bedrooms one and three.
2. Maintain current NSPs for all children.
3. Develop comprehensive NSPs that are time limited.
4. Ensure that the case files reflect that the children receive treatment services As identified in their NSPs.
5. Maintain current court authorizations for all prescribed psychotropic medications.
6. Provide children with sufficient clothing to meet DCFS clothing standards for quantity.
7. Provide children with required weekly minimum allowance.


In response to these recommendations Pioneer Boys Ranch has taken the following actions.

1. Window screens in the patio, kitchen, bedroom one and bedroom two have been repaired or replaced as of 9/20/05 (invoice attached). These repairs were initially delayed because the original screens made up were of the wrong gauge and did not fit the window tracks necessitating a reorder.

2. Mr. Kinzie and Mr. Wycoff, Pioneer staff responsible for formulating NSPs have made all NSPs current as of 8/31/05
3. Mr. Kinzie and Mr. Wycoff have incorporated time limits in all NSPs as of 8/31/05
4. Case files reflect all treatment received by the children. This was not a case of treatment not being provided, but an occasional lack of documentation listing said treatment. This oversight has been addressed as of 8/31/05
5. Pioneer maintains current court authorization for all prescribed psychotropic medication. In many cases the court does not respond timely to medication requests from the Psychiatrist. Pioneer Boys Ranch has entered into an agreement with the Santa Clarita Child and Family Mental Health Service and their psychiatrist Dr. Morgan. SCCF will obtain authorizations and Pioneer will document these authorizations in individual case files. The transfer of medication responsibility should be complete by 10/31/05. All psychotropic medication authorizations are current as of this date (9/22/05).
6. Pioneer Boys Ranch expends funds for clothing according to our agency program statement. Some children placed with no clothing are not able to be immediately brought up to standard with funds provided with initial clothing grants. Moreover some residents refuse items such as dress shoes, bathrobes, and slippers when they must utilize their clothing allowance to purchase same. Pioneer normally documents such preferences in the case file and the incident in question may have demonstrated a lapse in such documentation. Pioneer Boys Ranch will continue to provide adequate clothing and will document resident choices refusing certain items on the DCFS standards list.
7. Pioneer Boys Ranch has implemented the county's current allowance effective 8/15/05 even though we feel that the concept of guaranteed allowance flies in the face of solid parental judgment and is harmful to character and the formation of a successful work ethic.

We hope that the above plan of correction meets with your approval. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the above number.

Sincerely



Greg Tungerman
Executive Director